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A CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF YOUNG TERRITORY.¹

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The settlement of the portion of Texas designated on the maps for so long as "Young Territory" was retarded by the incursions of hostile Indians until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. After the annexation of Texas to the United States the Texas tribes were placed under the control of the Federal government which assumed the duty of protecting the Texan frontier from depredations by the savage tribes. As fully two-thirds of the state was unsettled at that time, one of the first acts of the national authorities to accomplish this purpose was the establishment of a cordon of forts from the Red river to the Rio Grande. Of these forts, Richardson, Belknap, Camp Cooper, and Phantom Hill were located in Young Territory. It was impossible for these garrisons, though well disciplined troops under efficient officers were stationed in them, to prevent frequent raids into the region whose unexcelled grazing facilities sustained countless herds of buffalo, antelope, deer, and mustangs, forming an ideal hunting ground for the red man and which, moreover, he claimed as his birthright. It is not strange that the fierce aboriginal tribes looked with jealous ire upon the gradual encroachments of the dominant race upon the Paradise of their savage tastes, or that they should wage a cruel and merciless warfare on the weak settlements of the daring intruder.

It was thought the native tribes of Texas—about 20 in number—were entitled to a domicile in the state on some of its vast unoccupied domain in order to reclaim them from the savage condition by instruction in the arts of civilization. The legislature of Texas set apart 55,728 acres of land to be reserved to the United States for this purpose. Under the supervision of Maj. R. S. Neighbors, two agencies were located, one on the main Brazos

¹Called in the statutes "Young Land District." See Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, IV 791.—EDITOR QUARTERLY.

river, below the junction of the Clear Fork, called the Brazos Agency, and the other sixty miles west on the Clear Fork, called the Comanche Reserve.¹

The native tribes of Texas consisted of two classes, the agricultural and the nomadic. Twelve of the agricultural class belonged to the Caddo family, and inhabited that part of the state lying east of the Brazos river, while the range of the class that depended on the chase for a subsistence was found in the western portion. Though at the time the Caddo tribes were first encountered by the white man they existed in separate tribes, they had a tradition that they had in time past been confederated and formed one nation, which similarity of language, tribal government, and laws of inheritance and marriage substantiate. They were more advanced towards civilization than any tribes north of Mexico, living in villages of good tents, wearing dress and ornaments, and cultivating the ground, producing crops of corn, melons, pumpkins, etc., which they providently stored for winter use. Though making incursions into other regions for the purpose of hunting, they always returned to their permanent home. Coronado encountered the Tejas Indians in the plains region and made use of them as guides to his expedition in 1540, and commends them for their faithfulness. Their village was on the east side of the Neches river, where Father Manzanet, who accompanied DeLeon's expedition into Texas for the purpose of dislodging the French in 1690, finding them so amenable and kindly, established the first Texas Mission, San Francisco de los Tejas, for their benefit. The good father expresses surprise at their crude civilization, and their system of tribal government, and above all at their ideas of religion, which recognized a chief spirit whom they called "Ayimat Caddo," and included a dim, undefined conception of a future state, as evidenced by the custom of burying provisions and weapons with the dead. He notes the deference paid by the tribe to its head chief or governor, who lived in a larger and better furnished house than the others and exacted a degree of reverence from his people that was suggestive of the ceremonies of royal courts among

¹*The Texas Almanac*, for 1859, p. 130.

civilized peoples.¹ It was from this tribe that the state took its name, Tejas or Texas.

All the Caddo tribes—Caddoes, Adaes, Bedaes, Keechies, Nacogdoches, Ionies, Anadaquas, Wacoos, Tawakanos, Towash, Enquisacoos, and Tejas—although at the time of the establishment of the reserve many of them were only feeble remnants, were placed upon the Brazos Agency and called for convenience “Caddoes.” The Tonkawas, though a nomadic tribe, as they were pacific and always friendly to the whites, were also placed upon this reservation.

The nomadic tribes of Texas were the Karankawas, Lipans, Tonkawas, Kiowas, Apaches, and Comanches. The Franciscan missionaries who had labored in Texas during the preceding century to civilize the more interesting and kindly disposed agricultural tribes had not been neglectful of these more ferocious denizens of the province, and had established missions for some of them. The Karankawas were a fierce tribe of gigantic size, who inhabited the coast region, and for whose benefit Mission Refugio was established; but at this period they had entirely disappeared. The Lipans ranged from the Brazos to the Mexican frontier along the foot of the mountains. They had acquired the Spanish language, and at an earlier date than the establishment of the reserves they emigrated to Mexico, but often made incursions on the southwestern frontier. In the war for Mexican independence, they fought on the side of the Republicans against the Spanish. The Tonkawas ranged between the Brazos and the Nueces from the coast as far inward as the upper Colorado. La Salle encountered them on the lower Guadalupe and was kindly treated by them. The Mission of Our Lady of Guadalupe was established for their benefit, the ruins of which may still be seen in Mission Valley. As this tribe was a bitter foe of the Comanches, who had almost destroyed them, they were placed among the friendly tribes on the Brazos Agency. The Apaches, whose village was at Bandera Pass, were a ferocious tribe that devastated the southwestern frontier from the earliest settlement of it by the Spanish. There are ruins in the upper Nueces which no doubt were missions established for them by the zealous fathers, who displayed not only

¹THE QUARTERLY, II 302-309.

fervid zeal, but courage of a high order in their attempt to civilize the fierce Texan tribes. After annexation, the Apaches, on account of the protection given their habitual range by the United States forts, had fallen back into New Mexico. The Kiowas claimed the Pan Handle of Texas for their range, and had made a treaty in 1853, agreeing to keep the peace and refrain from all hostilities for an annual payment of \$18,000 for ten years. How well it was kept will hereafter be seen. Finally must be named the numerous and powerful Comanches, a tribe of ferocious savages. All of the nomadic class were fearless horsemen, though awkward and ungainly on foot, supplying themselves in early times with horses from the herds of wild mustangs that roamed the western plains, and in later days by appropriating the numerous *caballadas* of the ranches of the settlements. Colonel Marcy, in his *Thirty Years of Army Life on the Border*, published in 1866, estimates their number at twelve to eighteen thousand. They were in three grand divisions, called by themselves, respectively, the Tennawas, Yamparacks, and Comanches, of which only the two latter ranged as far south as Texas. The band which was the dreaded foe of the Texan frontier was the last of these, or the Southern Comanches, for whom the Comanche Reserve on the Clear Fork of the Brazos was established.

Like all the other tribes, no matter how savage or migratory, the Comanches had their tribal laws, to which they clung with pertinacity. Their chiefs were elective and exercised a patriarchal rather than despotic control. They had a head chief and each clan or band had a chief besides, and all questions pertaining to the tribe were settled by a council. They called themselves "Naini," live people, as opposed to the peaceful tribes upon whom they had always preyed, and who held these ferocious foes in as great dread as did the white settlers. Though enemies of the Tonkawas, the Comanches were in alliance with the Apaches and Kiowas. There is a tradition that the Comanches were at first friendly to the Americans, though always the foes of the Spaniards. The San Saba Mission was successfully maintained for a long period for the benefit of these *Indios bravos* until mines were opened; and it may readily be conjectured that, in forcing these untutored savages to labor in them, a repetition of the cruel treat-

ment which history records was practiced in New Mexico and elsewhere under rigid Spanish taskmasters, had its share of the destruction of the mission. Stephen F. Austin narrates that on one of his trips to Mexico he was captured by a party of this tribe and released when they discovered he was an American. There are not wanting other instances of this tribe's fidelity to the white settlers in Texas. They made a treaty with the German Colony of Bettina, agreeing to vacate Fisher's Grant, lying between the Llano and San Saba rivers in the heart of their range, which they faithfully kept, never molesting the colonists in any way.¹ But whatever the cause, the Comanche finally became the *Hun* of the Texan frontier—a dread scourge. Their path was marked with gory victims, while others were torn from their homes by ruthless hands to endure a captivity worse than death.

The *Texas Almanac* for 1859 describes the two Indian reserves as follows:

"This reservation . . . called the Brazos Agency, . . . contains about eleven hundred souls. . . . On this reserve there are six hundred acres of land in successful cultivation in wheat and corn. The mode of culture is the same, or similar to that of the Americans. The Brazos Reserve Indians have made extraordinary progress in civilization since their settlement in 1853; and are very honest, trustworthy and industrious. They have a school, under the charge of Mr. Ellis Combes. Mr. C. reports fifty scholars in regular attendance; and, judging from the interest taken in this educational enterprise by the Old Indians, he is inclined to the opinion that good results will come of it. On this Reservation there are several good houses built expressly for the transaction of all and any business connected with the Indians. These buildings are situated near the center of the Reserve, in a very pretty mesquite valley, the approach to which affords a most lovely and sightly landscape. Capt. S. P. Ross, an old Texan, and a worthy man, is the Special Agent of the United States Government, in charge of the Brazos Agency. . . . His salary is \$1500 per annum.

"The Comanche Reserve is about sixty miles distant from the Brazos Agency, and is located on the Clear Fork of the Brazos River, forty-five miles above its confluence with the Main Brazos. Their Reserve extends over four leagues of land and contains four hundred souls—all Comanches, known as the Southern band of

¹THE QUARTERLY, III 36-39.

that tribe. Their head chief is a good man, and has been a valuable auxiliary in the reclamation of these Indians from savage life. He is known by the name of Kotemesie. The Comanches have not made the same progress as the Brazos Reserve Indians—not that they are any more indolent or lazy, but because of their total estrangement heretofore from the manners and customs of the white man. The Indians on the Brazos Reserve have always lived near, and frequently among the white settlers, while the Comanches have been outside of all intercourse of a friendly nature. This agency is furnished with all necessary buildings and, like the Brazos Agency, is supplied with competent and trustworthy farmers and artisans. The Comanches have a good crop this year, and will most probably make sufficient to bread themselves. Col. M. Leeper is their Agent, with a salary of \$1500 per annum.

“The United States Government has been very liberal in its appropriations for the benefit of the reclaimed savage, and has spared neither trouble nor expense in the furtherance of the peace policy.

“Maj. Neighbors disburses annually about \$80,000 for the use of the Texas Indians.”

In spite of these favorable reports of the attempt to civilize these tribes and domicile them in their native land, to which they clung with all the devoted patriotism of people of a higher order of civilization, Indian depredations with harrowing details of murder and capture of women and children were reported constantly. The troops at the posts were frequently compelled to follow the trail of the marauders in order to recapture prisoners and other property, which, if successfully accomplished, was generally at the cost of a bloody encounter.

In 1858 L. S. Ross, familiarly known as “Sul Ross,” a youth of eighteen years, while at home on a vacation from college, organized a company of one hundred and thirty-five warriors of the friendly tribes on the Brazos Agency and joined an expedition under Maj. Earl Van Dorn commanding the U. S. forces in this section of the frontier against the Comanches. October 1, 1858 the party came upon a large Comanche village on the False Washita River, in the Indian Territory. A sharp conflict followed, in the course of which ninety Indians were killed and a considerable number captured, either wounded or unhurt. The whites lost five killed and several wounded, including Ross and Van Dorn. In this battle was captured from the Comanches a little white girl

who seemed to be about eight years of age. Nothing could be learned of her relatives, and she was adopted by the young captain, taking the name of Lizzie Ross. She afterwards married a merchant who lived near Los Angeles, California. She died there two years ago.

Gen. Winfield Scott, commander-in-chief of the U. S. army, on hearing of this expedition, wrote to Ross, then an unknown Texas youth, commending his bravery, and offering to help him to a place in the regular army, but he declined the unusual offer and returned to college.

The severe punishment thus inflicted on the hostile tribe was easily forgotten and they were soon on the war path again. The reserves on the Clear Fork and Brazos were located in a region possessing unexcelled grazing facilities, and the Texan stock raisers, in constantly increasing numbers, braved the dangers of Indian attacks and brought their herds hither to fatten upon the rich pasturage. The reserve Indians were accused of committing depredations as well as the hostiles, and conflicts ensued in which a number were killed. The average citizen would not discriminate between the two classes of Indians. There was in his eyes "no good Indian save a dead one," and he looked on the "Reserves" as pampered wards of the government, drawing rations, arms, and ammunition free of expense to prey upon the helpless settlements. This was no doubt literally true of the Comanches, for many of the raiders the troops were so often compelled to follow were drawing supplies at the Reserve.

The result was the experiment of domiciling the Texas tribes within the state, which proved a failure, and in August, 1859, Maj. Geo. H. Thomas, of the United States army, transferred the tribes to the Indian Territory. The Indians went away reluctantly and were so incensed at their removal that they began at once a series of depredations on the frontier of Texas. The annuity paid by the government to the Kiowas was also withdrawn in this year on account of their failure to keep their treaty obligation. They attacked the settlements of Texas and enacted some fearful tragedies. The Comanche tribes formed a confederation with the avowed object of driving the Texans from their usurped possession of the Indian ranges.

An account of the shocking crimes committed by these lawless tribes on the upper Brazos alone would fill a volume. One of the most noted is subjoined. In June, 1860, Josephus Browning was killed and his son Frank severely wounded by a party of Comanches on their ranch on the Clear Fork near the mouth of Hubbard creek. A party was immediately organized by John R. Baylor, Walt. Reynolds, and other well known citizens to go in pursuit of the Indians. On the 28th of June, they overtook them on Paint Creek, and a severe fight ensued, in which 13 Indians were killed. The victors returned to Weatherford with the scalps of the slain savages, and also the scalp of a white woman, whom the Indians had killed in their raid, and which they had in their possession. Besides these ghastly trophies, the victors had bows and arrows, darts, quivers, shields, lances, and tomahawks. The news of the success of the party in avenging the Browning murder was received with great rejoicing by all classes throughout the settlement; for, besides the attack on the Brownings, the horrible killing of Mrs. Sherman, and many other outrages were still fresh in the peoples' memory. The occasion was celebrated by a public barbecue on the square in Weatherford, at which stirring speeches were listened to by a vast assemblage from every portion of the surrounding country. In the evening a dance was given at the court house, and on a rope stretched diagonally across the large room were hung the arms and equipments captured by the party and also the scalp of the white woman, as well as those of the slain warriors—grewsome decorations for a scene of festivity. General Baker exhibited these trophies of the Paint Creek fight in many other places, and everywhere among the settlers arose the cry, "Exterminate the Indians."¹ Governor Houston, though a life-long advocate of the peace policy in dealing with the native tribes, was forced, by the terror of the people on the frontier because of the imminent danger that threatened them from incursions of these powerful and merciless tribes, the Comanches and Kiowas, to order the enlistment of state troops to assist in protecting the exposed region. Among those who applied to him for a commission to raise a company of Rangers was young Sul Ross,

¹Smythe, *Historical Sketch of Parker County*, 138-140.

who had just completed his college course and returned to the state. Receiving the commission from the governor, he enrolled sixty men as rangers and established his camp at Fort Belknap, in the old Brazos Agency.

About this time some outrages were committed in Palo Pinto and Jack counties, contiguous to the country in which Ross's camp was located, and he determined to chastise the daring savages. Leaving twenty men to guard his post, he supplied their places in his command with twenty picked cavalymen of the 2nd Regiment of the United States army, then stationed at Camp Cooper, in the old Comanche Reserve, under Capt. N. G. Evans.

He led his company into the "Indian country," as the district north of the Clear Fork was then called, and on December 9, 1860, he came on a large Comanche village at the head of Pease River. In the course of the fight that followed the attack on the vallage, Captain Ross, who was accompanied by Lieut. Thomas Kelleheir, saw a party of three Indians, two of them upon one horse, and the other mounted alone. He followed the two that were mounted double, and Lieutenant Kelleheir followed the third. Captain Ross shot and killed the Indian that was riding behind, and this one, in falling, dragged the other from the horse. The survivor let fly a number of arrows at his pursuer, but by and by a shot from Captain Ross's revolver struck his elbow and disabled him. Ross demanded his surrender, but he refused; and, shortly afterwards, as he was singing his death song, a young Mexican killed him. He proved to be a noted chief, Peta Nocona, whom Ross had known well in former days.

When Captain Ross returned to Lieutenant Kelleheir, he found him cursing his luck because the Indian whom he had followed and captured was a squaw; but Ross called his attention to her blue eyes and told him she was at least no Indian squaw.

And she did indeed turn out to be a white woman. When the gallant young ranger, Capt. Ross, returned to Camp Cooper from his expedition against the Comanches with a female captive who showed her white blood, even though bronzed with exposure and having the habits of an Indian, the news was published extensively among the settlements. Among those who journeyed to this frontier post to examine the captive in hopes of finding a lost

child or relative, was the venerable Isaac Parker, for whom Parker county was named. He hoped to hear of a long-lost niece who was stolen from Parker's Fort, in Limestone county, May 19, 1836, by the Comanches. They were emboldened by the confused state of affairs in the province of Texas during the struggle for independence to make an invasion of the unprotected settlements. Attacking Parker's Fort, containing thirty-five persons, they killed all who were able to bear arms and carried several of the women and children off into captivity, but all the captives had been recovered except two, a girl and a boy. Many attempts had been made to recover these children by the Parker family, and the state had offered a ransom for them; but all efforts to recover them had failed, and a quarter of a century had now elapsed since their capture!

The age of the captive woman suited that of the object of Mr. Parker's search, but such a lapse of time would have transformed a child of nine beyond recognition in a life of ease; and how much more in the life of hardship among a roving tribe like the Comanches who, like all other savages, make drudges and slaves of their women! The captive had lost all knowledge of her native tongue, and maintained a stolid silence when addressed by her aged uncle. At length he said very distinctly to the interpreter, "The girl's name was Cynthia Ann." The familiar name aroused dim recollections of her past life, which time and suffering had wellnigh obliterated. The moment she heard her name she sprang to her feet and patting herself on the breast with joy beaming in her eyes, said excitedly, "Cynthia Ann! Cynthia Ann!" "I was convinced," says Mr. Parker, "of her identity and that in this poor creature I saw my long-lost niece."

She returned with her uncle to his home in the county that now bears his name. She had an infant with her at the date of her capture, and had left two other children with the Indians. She gradually adapted herself to a civilized life, learning to spin, weave, and sew, and made herself generally useful in domestic life. It has been said that she was not contented, and more than once attempted to escape and return to the Indians, but if this is true, it was because of her desire to recover her other children—a hope she was often heard to express. But death ended her

checkered career before this hope was realized. Her little child died shortly before its mother.¹ Her son Quanah is now chief of the tribe, living in peace and quiet on the princely reservation of over three million acres set apart by the general government for the three roving tribes, Apaches, Kiowas, and Comanches, in the southwestern part of the Indian Territory, in which Fort Sill is located.

When the Civil war began in 1861 the federal forts on the frontier were abandoned and some of them destroyed by the Union troops. Some of the officers resigned their commissions in the United States army and joined the Confederates, among them R. E. Lee, in command of Ft. Mason, and Maj. Earl Van Dorn. The gallant young Texan, Sul Ross, disbanded his company and enlisted in the Southern army as a private, but was soon promoted from one office to another still higher until he became a brigadier general of cavalry, the youngest of that rank in the service. His experience as a ranger fitted him well for the arduous campaigns of the fierce struggle. He was in one hundred and thirty-five engagements of greater or less importance and had seven horses shot from under him, but was never wounded during the whole war. The same kind Providence that protected him from the rude Comanche's battle-axe preserved him from the shot and shell of his more civilized foe.

The hostile tribes, still chafing under their forcible removal from Texas and seeing the frontier denuded of troops, renewed their attacks on the settlements, and many of the latter were abandoned. Some of the reservation Indians enlisted in the Union army, being within the Federal lines, but Placido, chief of the Tonkawas, refused to enlist, saying "he could never fight against Texas." In a mêlée which ensued he and a number of his men were killed. So great was the devotion of this simple tribe to their native land, they gradually came back, or a part of them, to the Clear Fork, where they were for a time allowed to stay on a reservation set apart for them near Fort Griffin. This was a post that was established after the civil war, when the Federal troops re-occupied the Texan frontier, and named for Maj. Gen. C. Griffin, commanding the military district of Texas. For many years suc-

¹For a more detailed narrative of this episode, see De Shields, *Cynthia Ann Parker*.

ceeding the war, Indian incursions continued, in spite of the vigilance of the troops, under the determined and gallant Gen. R. S. Mackenzie, and the desperate efforts of the long-suffering and revengeful frontiersmen. Fort Griffin was in the great buffalo range, and became the base of supplies for the buffalo hunters. These hunters soon denuded the adjacent region of the vast herds of this noble American species that had been from time immemorial the chief support of the wild tribes inhabiting the plains of the Northwest. Adventurous stockmen soon overspread the splendid pastoral section with their herds of cattle from the more settled portion of the state, and ranches of the crudest description, consisting of rude huts or "dug-outs" and picket *corrals* in the midst of open, unfenced ranges were established. Soon some of the counties were organized, and the district known as Young Territory disappeared from the maps of the state.

With the removal of the Tonkawas the last vestige of the native Texan tribes disappeared from the state. The wide variation in the two classes of our native tribes was mostly the result, no doubt, of the difference between the fertile, well-watered region of eastern Texas, where a subsistence was easily obtained, and the arid plains of the west, with their vast herds of herbivorous animals. But who can tell how great an influence the devoted Franciscan missionaries, who first chanted the *Te Deum* in these wilds two centuries ago and labored faithfully among these poor children of nature for a whole century, may have had on them? The partial knowledge of Spanish existing among them and the common occurrence of Spanish names such as Placido, José Maria, Santa Anna (names of noted chieftains), are conclusive evidence of it to the reflecting mind. We can but believe, had patience had "her perfect work" with these aborigines of our state, and the seed sowed by the pious fathers been carefully nurtured, many dark pages in our history might have been avoided. Instead of having only rude monuments, a few painted rocks with quaint picture inscriptions, many blood-stained battlefields and desecrated village sites, a collection of rude arms, shields, and savage ornaments, and the names of a few cities, mountains, and streams, to remind us of these tribes, we might have had happy and peaceful races lifted from barbarism to civilization to bless the coming of the Anglo-Saxon to his Paradise!